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Students prepare for a green future at Energy Summit

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MUNCIE -- America's next great environmental mind might be sitting in an East Central Indiana classroom, and educators are looking for every inspirational opportunity.

That was the thought behind Monday's Energy Summit at Delta High School. Created by Delta teachers Lance Bland and Pat Ervin to "empower high school students to reflect on economic and environmental impacts of energy," the morning-long event featured presentations by professors and professionals alike.

"You guys, because you're the generation coming up, are going to inherit the problems; you're going to have to do something about it," said the day's keynote speaker, George Crabtree, a senior scientist at the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. The lab works with the U.S. Department of Energy.

Bland, a science teacher, and Ervin, a social studies and economics teacher -- both of them award-winning -- invited science, English and economics students from Delta, Southside High School and Union City Community High School to what they hope is the first in a series of annual summits.

After John Vann, a Ball State University professor and climate ambassador trained by Al Gore, talked about global warming, Delta junior Taylor Davis peppered him with questions.

Davis, on the fast-track to becoming an engineer under Delta's Project Lead the Way program, said eventually getting a job involving green energy would be the ultimate dream. He plans to study engineering at Purdue University, and said he wants to learn more since Brevini Wind and VAT Group are opening shop here in Delaware County.

"You could get an internship or a job right here," Davis said.

And that's the hope -- that local students will play a role in, and eventually drive, what happens with sustainable energy.

Of course, these are topics that appeal to more than just engineers and mathematicians. Lillian Biggs, a senior at Union City, said she's concerned about the environment and cares about what happens to the planet.

"I've been thinking about stuff like this because of the Earth and what's happening to it and (to) the animals," Biggs said.

She's never considered it a way to make a living, but after learning Ball State is spending \$70 million on a geothermal heating and cooling system for its campus, Biggs said she could imagine applying her interest in economics to green energy.

But first she planned to tell her parents they needed an energy upgrade at home.